

Message Text

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SUBJ: REVIEW OF COLOMBIAN FMD PROGRAM

1. US/COLOMBIAN SENIOR REVIEW GROUP (SRG) HELD FIRST REVIEW OF COLOMBIAN FMD PROGRAM IN CORDIAL AND FRANK ATMOSPHERE. SRG REACHED A NUMBER OF CONCLUSIONS ON THE TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE ASPECTS OF PROGRAM AND RECOMMENDED IMPROVEMENTS. COPY OF SRG REPORT WILL BE FORWARDED TO WASHINGTON ASAP. PARTICIPANTS FOUND REVIEW VERY USEFUL FOR EXCHANGE OF VIEWS IN DETAIL ON ALL ASPECTS OF PROGRAM. REVIEW CONFIRMED THAT PROGRAM WILL BE VERY DIFFICULT TO EXECUTE BECAUSE OF THE TECHNICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLEXITIES INVOLVED.

2. SRG FOUND THAT ICA HAS MADE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS IN INITIATING ITS PART OF PROGRAM AS DEMONSTRATED BY ICA'S SUCCESSFUL ERADICATION OF A LARGE FMD OUTBREAK IN ZONE 1, SOME 15 MILES FROM PANAMA BORDER AND ERADICATION OF A SMALLER OUTBREAK IN MAY WHICH REQUIRED ONLY 9 DAYS FROM DETECTION TO SLAUGHTER, FUMIGATION AND INSPECTION. ALSO ENCOURAGING IS THE POSITIVE AND SERIOUS ATTITUDE OF MINISTER OF AGRICULTURE AND SENIOR ICA OFFICIALS TOWARD IMPLEMENTATION OF PROGRAM AND THE HIRING AND PLACEMENT OF MOST ICA PROGRAM PERSONNEL TO THE FIELD.

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3. ALTHOUGH THESE ACCOMPLISHMENTS MAKE PROSPECTS FOR SUCCESS-

FUL PROGRAM VERY POSITIVE IN THE LONG RUN, MUCH OF IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE HAS BEEN SLOWED BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE DIFFICULTIES, NOT UNEXPECTED, INVOLVED IN INITIATING THE PROGRAM. THE MAJOR SHORTCOMING HAS BEEN INDERENA'S FAILURE TO ESTABLISH A PRESENCE IN THE LOS KATIOS NATIONAL PARK TO STOP THE PRESENT CONTINUING INFLOW OF NEW SETTLERS INTO THE PARK ALONG THE PROPOSED DARIEN HIGHWAY ROUTE. IT WILL LIKELY TAKE AT LEAST 3 MORE MONTHS FOR INDERENA TO ESTABLISH A CAPABILITY TO STOP THE PRESENT POPULATION MOVEMENT AND CONSIDERABLY LONGER TO REMOVE SETTLERS ALREADY IN THE PARK. INDERENA'S PERFORMANCE HAS BEEN DEFICIENT IN MOST OTHER REGARDS. IN SRG'S MEETING WITH AGRICULTURE MIN, HE CHASTISED INDERENA OFFICIALS FOR INDERENA'S UNSATISFACTORY PROGRESS AND STRONGLY URGED FASTER ACTION, ESPECIALLY WITH REGARD TO STOPPING THE POPULATION MOVEMENT INTO THE PARK.

4. ALTHOUGH SRG DID NOT SPECIFICALLY FOCUS ON THE DEGREE OF PRESENT DANGER THAT FMD COULD SPREAD NORTHWARD, VIEW OF US MEMBERS IS THAT THIS DANGER HAS NOT DIMINISHED AND MAY IN FACT HAVE INCREASED AS REFLECTED BY OCCURRENCE OF THE TWO RECENT FMD OUTBREAKS IN THE BORDER AREA. US MEMBERS WERE ABLE TO ACHIEVE SRG ADOPTION OF RECOMMENDATIONS THAT URGENT MEASURES BE TAKEN WHICH WILL LEAD TO A REDUCTION OF THIS DANGER.

5. EMBASSY COMMENT. SRG DID NOT DISCUSS TIMING OF DARIEN HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION BUT THE US MEMBERS CONSIDER THAT INITIATING CONSTRUCTION IN COLOMBIA PRIOR TO GOC DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO STOP FLOW OF NEW SETTLERS INTO LOS KATIOS NATIONAL PARK, AND TO TAKE OTHER IMPORTANT MEASURES, WOULD FURTHER EXACERBATE THE DANGER OF FMD SPREADING BY ENCOURAGING THE FLOW OF SETTLERS AND INCREASING ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES IN THE AREA. THEY THEREFORE BELIEVE THAT INITIATION OF HIGHWAY CONSTRUCTION IN COLOMBIA SHOULD NOT BE CONSIDERED AT LEAST UNTIL AFTER NEXT SRG REVIEW IN ABOUT 6 MONTHS, ESPECIALLY IN VIEW OF THE IMPENDING CHANGE OF GOVERNMENT ON AUGUST 7, 1974. INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS WITH GOC OFFICIALS INDICATE THAT THE NEW GOVERNMENT WILL BE UNLIKELY TO MAKE MAJOR CHANGES IN THE TECHNICAL EXECUTION OF THE FMD PROGRAM, OR PURSUE IT WITH LESS DILIGENCE, ALTHOUGH THERE WILL PROBABLY BE CHANGES IN THE DIRECTORSHIP OF ICA. THEY THEREFORE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE PRUDENT TO ASSESS THE PERFORMANCE OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN THIS REGARD BEFORE MAKING ANY DECISION ON THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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HIGHWAY. I HAVE NO OBJECTION TO THESE RECOMMENDATIONS SINCE THE CONCERNS OVER UNCONTROLLED POPULATION MOVEMENT SEEM TO ME VALID AND REAL. THE RECOMMENDED DELAY WILL EFFECTIVELY PREVENT ANY CONSTRUCTION FOR AT LEAST A YEAR, SINCE CONSTRUCTION COULD NOT THEN BE READIED BY THE NOV/DEC DRY SEASON, BUT IT IS PROBABLY TOO LATE NOW TO MEET THAT PERIOD ANYWAY.
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